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Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 24 February 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to draw your kind attention to the establishment in the United Nations of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking.

This Group of Friends is an informal, voluntary and open-ended association of Member States created to help reinvigorate and consolidate the global fight against trafficking in persons.

The Group of Friends seeks to enhance the role of the United Nations in fighting human trafficking and to promote better coordination and cohesiveness of anti-trafficking efforts, including through elaboration and implementation of a global plan of action against trafficking in persons.

On the eve of consultations in the General Assembly on a global plan of action against trafficking in persons, we have the honour to submit for your kind attention a non-paper worked out by the Group of Friends which contains some arguments in favour of the elaboration of a global plan of action and possible substantive elements of the future document (see annex).

We would appreciate if you could kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 114.

We would also be glad to share with you personally our ideas regarding the plans and intentions of the Group of Friends. In this regard, we would be grateful if you could meet with the members of the Group at your earliest convenience.

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Please recycle

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Annex to the letter dated 24 February 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

Why a global plan of action against human trafficking?

While the slave trade was abolished two centuries ago, slavery is not yet just history. One of its modern manifestations is trafficking in persons. With respect to preventing and suppressing this heinous crime, it is high time that the efforts of the world community were harnessed and synergized by channelling them into a coherent, balanced and comprehensive framework.

1. Arguments for a global plan

- There are many treaties and agreements on the subject of human trafficking: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Trafficking Protocol); various International Labour Organization conventions; and a multiplicity of regional documents and initiatives. Each of them brings its own added value to the global fight against trafficking in persons.

- Yet, all these instruments are still not universally adhered to, are characterized by differences in the extent of their ratification and implementation, and target different aspects of human trafficking. The global normative anti-trafficking structure is dispersed. It seems only logical in this context to impart to the existing structure some degree of coherence and uniformity.

- A global plan of action would serve as a global mechanism that ensured the implementation of all anti-trafficking instruments in a unified and genuinely comprehensive manner.

- There are numerous players in the area of human trafficking that were not quite so visible on the global scene a decade ago: international organizations, civil society, the private sector. Very often, the efforts of these actors involved in the area of trafficking in persons are compartmentalized and uncoordinated and are not channelled towards common goals. The existing international anti-trafficking instruments aim to harmonize appropriate national acts of legislation; they do not, however, prescribe roles for the increasing number of non-State actors. This means that there is the lack of an all-engaging structure for global cooperation against human trafficking.

- This is why we also need a global framework that ensures effective cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders and the multiplicity of anti-human trafficking initiatives. Thus, there emerges a need for the fourth P, namely, partnership, which should join the three traditional Ps: prevention, prosecution and protection.

- There is a worldwide perception that the trafficking in persons is a hidden crime whose true extent is unknown because of existing gaps as regards reliable global data and monitoring mechanisms. The global plan of action will ensure better data collection and promote research on trafficking in persons.

- The global plan of action does not entail a duplication of the existing efforts in this area. And it would be wrong to reject this mechanism on the grounds that support already exists for the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. The plan and the Protocol do not conflict with each other: The goal of the Protocol is to bring in line national acts of legislation. The goal of the global plan of action is to assist in this process by, among other measures, taking on board important new players.

- The global plan of action will be a logical and meaningful culmination of the current critical build-up of awareness, good practices and action against trafficking in persons within and outside the United Nations.

- The global plan of action will promote the opportunity to establish links with the Millennium Development Goals which will be necessary in addressing the root causes of and the push-and-pull factors associated with trafficking in persons. Poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, discrimination and gender-based violence are some of the root causes that increase the vulnerability of the victims of trafficking and are matters that the Millennium Development Goals are concerned with as well.

2. Possible principles and goals of a global plan

Principles

- Balanced and coherent consideration of all aspects of, and the principles underlying, the combating of human trafficking: prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership

- Recognition of the shared goals and differentiated responsibilities of Member States

- Collaboration of Member States, international intergovernmental and parliamentary organizations, civil society, mass media and the private sector in the elimination of trafficking in persons

- Equal targeting of the "demand" and "supply" sides of human trafficking

- A balanced focus on all forms of exploitation of trafficked victims, including the sexual and labour-related forms, with due account taken of the gender- and age-related vulnerabilities of women and children

Goals

- Comprehensive conceptualization of the current international system of anti-trafficking instruments and mechanisms

- Reaffirmation of the commitments of Member States to taking decisive action to prosecute traffickers, protect their victims and prevent trafficking in persons

- Ensuring the systematic and long-term attention of the United Nations system and other international organizations, within their respective mandates, to the crime of human trafficking
- Strengthening of the organizational and logistic framework to ensure the most effective cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders and the multiplicity of anti-trafficking initiatives, efficient use of available instruments and resources, prevention of duplication of efforts, maximizing the resources and the contributions that various actors can provide to the fight against human trafficking, pooling data, and facilitating information and intelligence exchange
- Identification and elimination of gaps in the normative and institutional mechanisms of international anti-trafficking cooperation
- Institutionalization of multiagency cooperation with representative memberships and clearly delineated roles and responsibilities with respect to the prevention of trafficking in persons and the identification of the victims and their return and reintegration
- Ensuring a human rights-oriented and victim-centred approach to anti-trafficking activities

3. **Possible procedure for the elaboration and adoption of a global plan of action**

- Informal, open, inclusive and transparent consultations on a global plan of action
- Adoption of a global plan of action by the General Assembly in a resolution, at a plenary meeting of the Assembly